

ROBERT JOHNSTON.

[To accompany Bill H. R. No. 238.]

MARCH 2, 1860.

Mr. COBB, from the Committee on Public Lands, made the following

REPORT.

The Committee on Public Lands, to whom was referred the petition of Robert Johnston, submit the following report :

That during the summer or fall of the year 1848 Robert Johnston purchased twenty-four discharges from soldiers of the late war with Mexico, having paid the sum of eighty dollars for each discharge. Robert Johnston was engaged in the brokerage or banking business in Philadelphia, and was importuned by the soldiers who were in that city at that time to purchase their discharges, but hesitated because it was not in the regular line of his business. The said Robert Johnston was unacquainted with the law regulating the transfer of the soldiers' interest and title to bounty lands, as was shown by evidence before your committee, but was advised and believed that a general power of attorney, acknowledged before an alderman, authorizing the said Robert Johnston to receive and dispose of the warrants to be issued, was sufficient to vest the title to the warrants in the said Robert Johnston, and that upon the discharges being forwarded to the Pension Office, accompanied by the powers of attorney, the Commissioner of Pensions would issue the warrants directly to him, the said Robert Johnston. That accordingly the said Robert Johnston had the powers of attorney so acknowledged and executed before Chancey Bulkley, an alderman of Philadelphia, each soldier being examined by said alderman, and declaring his intention to convey to said Robert Johnston his bounty land warrant. That soon after the said Robert Johnston became possessed of said discharges and powers of attorney, he made application to the Commissioner of Pensions for the issue of the warrants to himself ; but that the warrants were issued on each of said discharges in the names of said soldiers, and to the care of the said Robert Johnston, as follows :

1. No. 38,712, Jesse C. Moore.
2. No. 42,740,* John C. Hardy, (39,759.)
3. No. 55,298, John Wallace.
4. No. 45,729, Jeremiah Gensmer.

* I think the numbers marked thus were inserted by mistake, being the numbers on the back ; those in parentheses are in the body of the warrants. J. M. Q.

5. No. 42,737,* William E. Fennimore, (39,756.)
6. No. 39,746,* John Lehman, (35,918.)
7. No. 37,176, Henry Wells.
8. No. 45,731, George M. Newell.
9. No. 44,880, Daniel Adams.
10. No. 44,875, Ludolph Wedemayre.
11. No. 44,876, Daniel Mayer.
12. No. 45,866, John Randolph.
13. No. 44,859, Charles Corragin.
14. No. 35,885, Charles H. Burns.
15. No. 35,919, Amos Lightner.
16. No. 44,878, Henry E. Layton.
17. No. 38,726, James Smith.
18. No. 35,913, John Hun.
19. No. 39,755, James Deal.
20. No. 44,379, Samuel K. Worms.
21. No. 44,698, Bagshaw Barsley.
22. No. 38,713, Thomas F. Mahon.
23. No. 44,853, John Kolk.
24. No. 44,877, Frederick Meyer.

That all the above warrants were duly received, and have ever since been in the possession of the said Robert Johnston. That it was not until after the discharges and powers of attorney were forwarded by the said Robert Johnston that he became aware of the fact that he could not by law transfer and dispose of the warrants under the powers of attorney which had been executed to him by the above-named soldiers. That this information was first obtained by said Robert Johnston from the Commissioner of Pensions by way of reply to the application made by him for the issue of the warrants to him direct. But owing to the press of business in the Pension Office, this reply was not communicated to him for several months after the application was made by him. That Robert Johnston has made search for these soldiers, but has been unable to find any of them. They were generally young men whose homes were in different sections of the country, and they have long since left the city of Philadelphia. That eight years have elapsed and no caveats have been entered upon said warrants, as will appear by the certificate of _____, the Commissioner of Pensions, hereto annexed. It would therefore appear that in their present situation these warrants are of no benefit to the said Robert Johnston or any other person, and will prove a very heavy loss to said Robert Johnston, unless relief be granted to him.

Your committee would therefore suggest that an act be passed perfecting the title of the said Robert Johnston to said warrants, and making the transfer valid, and authorizing the proper officer, upon satisfactory evidence of *bona fide* ownership being adduced, to grant to the said Robert Johnston, or his assignees, patents for the lands upon which said warrants may be located.

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